

**WASHINGTON. D.C.** – Following weeks of controversy surrounding the White House's role in efforts to manipulate primary elections in Pennsylvania and Colorado, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Ranking Member Darrell Issa (R-CA) today challenged President Obama to come forward and directly address if he condones the efforts by his Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel and Deputy Chief of Staff, Jim Messina in trying to obtain the withdrawal of Pennsylvania Democratic Senate nominee and Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) and Colorado Democratic Senate candidate Andrew Romanoff (D) by offering them jobs and/or appointments.

"After he won the South Carolina Democratic Primary, then candidate-Obama assailed the status-quo of Washington saying that night that 'we are up against the idea that it's acceptable to say anything and do anything to win an election.' What happened to that version of Barack Obama," asked Issa. "Two of his most senior and trusted advisors are running rogue in the White House engaging in the very activities President Obama has spent a lifetime assailing. As someone who has spent the better part of life running a business, I would never tolerate this type of rogue behavior from two my most senior employees. If the President still believes what he said the night of the South Carolina Democratic Primary, there needs to be consequences and the President must respond directly and personally to the America people."

When asked earlier in the week if the President had any opinion about these recent controversies and if they "disturb him at all," White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs responded, "I did not talk to him about this." As today's [Washington Post editorial asks:](#)

“IS PRESIDENT OBAMA comfortable with the actions of White House officials in dangling federal jobs as political inducements... the American people deserve to hear directly from the president about whether he is happy with this behavior.”

“President Obama likes to talk about accountability and project an image of being in charge or control, yet these recent controversies raise legitimate questions surrounding what exactly is going on in Barack Obama’s White House,” asked Issa. “White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said the President had no prior knowledge of these incidents so the outstanding question for President Obama is does he condone these efforts and if not, what is he going to do about it?”

### [Washington Post Editorial: Romanoff job offer demands response from Obama](#)

IS PRESIDENT OBAMA comfortable with the actions of White House officials in dangling federal jobs as political inducements? An episode involving former [Colorado House Speaker Andrew Romanoff](#) (D) is more troubling than the previously disclosed [incident involving Rep. Joe Sestak \(D-Pa.\)](#)

. The White House wanted to clear the primary field for the endangered incumbent, Sen. Michael Bennet. Not unusual, except that to achieve its aims the White House offered the prospect of a federal job for Mr. Romanoff if he were to eschew the Senate race. In Mr. Sestak's case, the White House at least had the sense to use former president Bill Clinton as

an intermediary to inquire whether Mr. Sestak might be prevailed upon to stay out of the race; more important, the feeler to Mr. Sestak involved an unpaid advisory post, not a full-time federal job. The Romanoff episode was even cruder.

If this is not a quid pro quo -- a federal job in exchange for dropping the Senate bid -- it is uncomfortably close. Substitute Karl Rove for Jim Messina and imagine the uproar if the Bush administration had engaged in such a baldly political exchange.

Is it a crime? Probably not. Federal law prohibits anyone from promising federal employment as a "reward for any political activity," but the Justice Department's official guidance for prosecutors says this is "not intended to reach the consideration of political factors in the hiring or termination of the small category of senior public employees." Both sides say that no firm job offer was made. But the absence of illegality is hardly the end of the inquiry -- and it is certainly not the standard of behavior that President Obama posed for his administration. White House press secretary Robert Gibbs [said that Mr. Obama did not know about the Romanoff overtures in advance](#), and Mr. Gibbs blew off questions about his reaction by saying he hadn't discussed the matter with the president. That's not sufficient. The American people deserve to hear directly from the president about whether he is happy with this behavior.

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